

POLICY 1450

SCENT SENSITIVE WORKPLACE

Drafted: November 8, 2023
Adopted: November 27, 2023
Revised:
Frequency of Review: Annual

1.0 RATIONALE

- 1.1 To ensure that everyone has a safe place to work and that the Greater Victoria School District (GVSD) is in accordance with the Workers Compensation Act and its requirements under the law.
- 1.2 It is the policy of Greater Victoria School District (GVSD) to provide a safe and healthy work environment for all employees, students, volunteers, contractors, and others who regularly carry out activities within GVSD worksites. This includes all buildings and schools, owned, or leased by GVSD. This will be accomplished by eliminating or minimizing as much as possible, the use of products and fragrances whose scent or other properties, are known to trigger allergic or other hazardous reactions.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 "Scents" often mean the smells or odours from ingredients and chemicals in personal hygiene products (including, but not limited to, perfume, make-up, shampoo, deodorant, etc.) or from other products such as air fresheners, cleaners, etc.
- 2.2 There is no exact definition for "scent-free", "fragrance-free" or "unscented". Products labelled as "unscented" may contain ingredients that are used to mask or hide the smell of other ingredients.

3.0 POLICY

- 3.1 GVSD is respectful of health concerns arising from exposure to scents on District sites. GVSD, as an employer, has a duty to support employees who may be affected and suffer a medical reaction when exposed to a fragrance or scented product. Exposure to fragrances/scents can cause significant health problems in susceptible individuals.
- 3.2 GVSD expects that all staff, students, parents and visitors refrain from using personal products containing fragrances which are known to trigger adverse physical reactions such as respiratory distress and/or headaches. This includes, but is not limited to, cosmetics, hair styling products, antiperspirants, deodorants, cologne, hair spray, perfume, after shave, and

body washes. Other environmental products in the workplace that may trigger reactions include, but are not limited to, diffusers and essential oils, deodorizers, and soaps with fragrance. All staff, students, parents, and visitors are asked to refrain from using these and similar products in the workplace. In addition, certain types of flowers are not permitted within the workplace. They include freesia, lilacs, lavenders, lilies, hyacinth, narcissus, chrysanthemum, helianthus, and peonies.

- 3.3 Information regarding this Policy shall be posted on the District Website for staff and provided in written materials for students and parents prior to the start of the school year and periodically throughout the school year as reminders. The policy will also be identified on all GVSD job postings and made a part of all new hire orientations. All GVSD staff are responsible to administer this policy, and are expected to communicate it in a respectful, positive and polite manner to individuals who are not in compliance.
- 3.4 Where specific products are necessary for proper cleaning/disinfecting, and for the proper maintenance and upkeep of the facility, the District will make every effort possible to select unscented products where available. Where that is not possible, the District will endeavour to select products that use the lowest possible levels of scent and/or that contain scents that are least likely to have irritant properties. In all cases, choices will be made in a manner that continues to achieve the intended purpose.
- 3.5 Maintenance or Custodial Services staff who plan to utilize a known scented product due to the unavailability of an alternate scent free/reduced product (e.g., painting, stripping, burnishing, or polishing floors, etc.) shall provide advance notice to school administration of affected areas in order to inform staff, in advance, of the potential for exposure to scented products. Those who are susceptible to an adverse reaction related to such products are expected to take appropriate precautions not to place themselves in jeopardy, with assistance from their administrative team, as needed.
- 3.6 This Policy does not apply to scents, smells or odours resulting from or associated with culturally responsive activities/ceremonies.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 Principals/Managers/Supervisors have a responsibility to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to make the working environment safe for those with chemical sensitivities in the same manner that any other health issue or safety hazard is addressed (including consideration of ventilation options). In the interest of creating and maintaining a safe and healthy working environment, this policy will assist Principals/Managers/Supervisors with implementing a scent sensitive workplace.

- 4.2 Section 21(1)(a) of the Workers Compensation Act requires that every employer must ensure the health and safety of all workers working for that employer. Section 22(1)(a) of the Workers Compensation Act requires that every employer must remedy any workplace conditions that are hazardous to the health of safety of the employer's workers.
- 4.3 The BC Human Rights Code creates a duty or an obligation to accommodate, including under the ground of disability. The District is legally obliged to accommodate employees with a disability to the point of undue hardship.

5.0 REFERENCES

- i. Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety [CCOHS]:
https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/hsprograms/scnt_free.pdf

